

CHILDREN'S CLOTHES -- FUN AND FUNCTIONAL

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Clothing can be fun and functional and at the same time help children develop social and physical skills. Children learn to express themselves through the clothing they wear. Knowing what kinds of clothing children like can help you make appropriate clothing selections. Children also should have some opportunities to make their own choices. Making constructive suggestions to guide children in their selections is better than criticizing them for their choices.

Clothes for Social Development

Young children enjoy dressing like their friends. Wearing clothing that is similar to their friends', especially others of the same sex, helps children feel they belong and fulfills their desire to conform. If they are forced to wear clothes that are dramatically different from those other children are wearing, they may feel very self-conscious, anxious or inferior.

Children
like to
dress
alike



Children may become very opinionated about what they will or will not wear. For example, a little girl may decide that she only wants to wear dresses or skirts. If she is forced to wear long pants, she may be irritable and unhappy. Though children's opinions may be strong, they usually are short-lived. Since children are unpredictable, they may occasionally want to dress differently than their friends just to express their independence.

Children also may show their independence by refusing to wear clothing chosen by parents. What parents like and what children like are often very different.

Children like to have new clothes, even if they are hand-me-downs. They usually want to wear the new clothes immediately and may have to be coaxed into changing them.

Younger children often prefer bright colors for clothes and like decorative effects such as appliques, ribbons or buttons. They may have definite ideas about what colors "go together" and may insist that colors "match."

Children
like
attractive
clothes



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Clothes with Self-Help Features

Clothing that is easy to get on and off helps children develop self-confidence and encourages independence in dressing. Learning to dress is not an easy task for a child. Children may become impatient if dressing takes too long or if they must ask for much help. Self-help features should be considered in selecting children's clothes. A self-help garment is one the child can put on and take off with little or no help from an adult. Self-help features include:

- front openings which are easy to reach
- simple, easy-to-manage styles (one-piece garments may be easier to handle than two or more pieces)
- large buttons or fasteners, or zippers with big rings or decorative pull tabs, which are easy to manipulate and conveniently located
- armholes, sleeves and necks which are large enough to get into easily
- stretch fabrics
- elastic in waistbands and wristbands
- distinct front and back openings, or openings which have the front or back marked (as with contrasting thread on the inside)
- left and right marks, if needed, in shoes and gloves
- attached belts and sashes (avoid separate belts which are difficult to handle, as well as sashes which tie in the back)
- shoes which do not have to be tied, or those with elastic laces

**Children
like to
dress
themselves**



Self-help features also make clothes adaptable for frequent toileting. Clothing which is easy to get up and down allows a child to go to the bathroom without aid from an adult.

Clothes for Comfort

Children enjoy clothes that are comfortable. Garments that are tight, restrict movement or hinder the development of muscular skills are inappropriate for a child's active life. Elastic that is too tight not only is uncomfortable but also can cut off circulation. Garments that are too loose can be equally frustrating because they may hinder movement or tend to fall off. Children often mention poor fit as a reason for disliking certain clothes.

Tails on blouses or skirts should be long enough to stay in place when tucked into skirts, pants or shorts.

One-piece items such as jump suits should be long enough in the crotch to allow ease of movement.

Besides good fit, other features are important to clothing comfort. Light-weight to medium-weight clothes are less restricting than heavy, bulky clothes. Also, excess weight may tire a child at play. Clothing need not be heavy to be warm. Children love soft fabrics and interesting textures. Avoid stiff and scratchy fabrics which may irritate the skin.

Fabrics of natural fibers, such as cotton and wool, allow the air to circulate next to the body and provide comfort for the child. Blends of natural and synthetic fibers, such as cotton and polyester, are more comfortable than all-synthetic fibers.

Children may feel more comfortable playing in clothes that do not soil or tear easily. Clothing with soil release finishes and wrinkle-free characteristics is a real help to parents. Fabrics for play clothes should be durable. Stretch fabrics are especially good because they allow freedom of movement. Delicate garments are not appropriate for play if a child must sacrifice fun to wear them. Designating certain clothes for play and others for dressing up will be helpful to a child.

Clothes for Safety

Flame retardant clothing is a wise choice for children, particularly for sleepwear and play clothes. Light and bright colors help make children more visible, especially when playing near streets. Reflective tape may be used on clothes worn at night or in early mornings, such as when children are walking or riding bikes to school.



**Children
need clothes
for action
and safety**

Clothes That Teach

Children's clothing can teach certain mental skills such as counting, spelling, or identifying

colors, shapes or objects. Certain muscular skills, such as tying a bow, can also be learned from clothing.

Ideas for clothes that teach include:

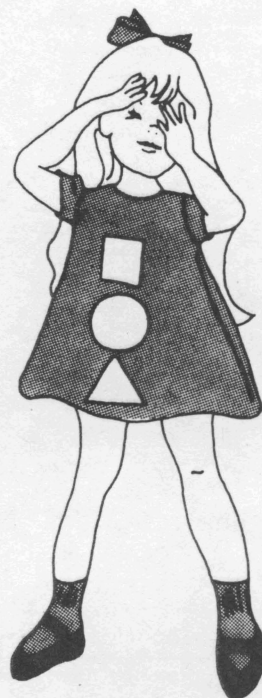
- large buttons, snaps, zippers or lacing which are conveniently located on the front of a garment so a child can practice muscular skills
- appliqued letters, numbers, arrows or shapes to identify
- fabrics printed with words or objects (Associations of words or letters with objects or colors can be taught with appliques or printed fabrics, for example, the letter "R" with a picture of a rooster or the words "Go" and "Stop" with the colors green and red to teach traffic safety.)

For homesewers, there are many clever commercial patterns available for children's clothes with features that teach skills.

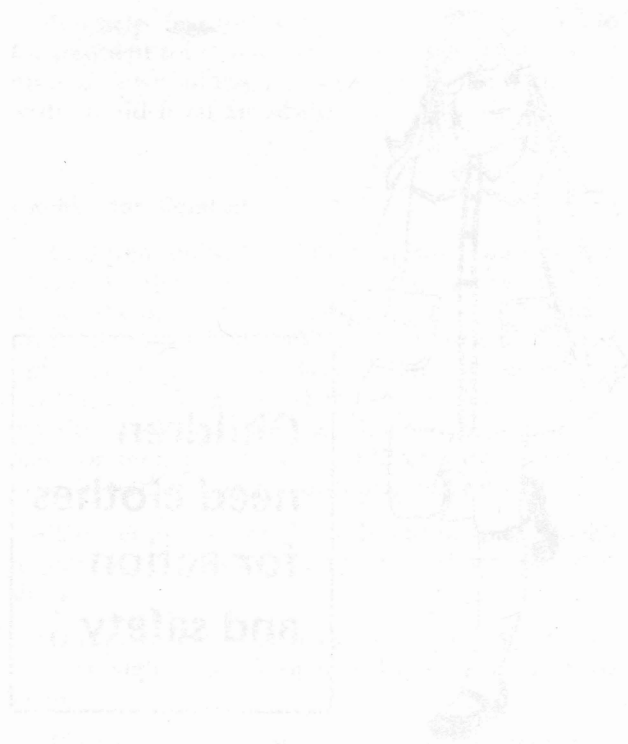
Attractive, comfortable, safe clothes can help make childhood more delightful. They can help children develop self-confidence and independence, learn mental and muscular skills, make choices and adjust socially.



**Children
like
clothes
that
teach**



Children like to play. They like to run and jump and climb. They like to make things and to make things for others. They like to be helpful and to be kind. They like to be brave and to be strong. They like to be smart and to be wise. They like to be happy and to be healthy. They like to be good and to be bad. They like to be different and to be the same. They like to be alone and to be with others. They like to be in the past and to be in the future. They like to be in the world and to be in the universe. They like to be in the sky and to be in the water. They like to be in the land and to be in the air. They like to be in the sun and to be in the moon. They like to be in the stars and to be in the planets. They like to be in the galaxies and to be in the universe. They like to be in the world and to be in the universe. They like to be in the sky and to be in the water. They like to be in the land and to be in the air. They like to be in the sun and to be in the moon. They like to be in the stars and to be in the planets. They like to be in the galaxies and to be in the universe.



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